

**City of Northampton, MA**  
**Transportation and Parking Commission**

June 20, 2023

**MEETING MINUTES**

Submitted by: Beth A. Kaplowitt

1. DPW Director Donna LaScaleia called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. and announced that there would be audio/video recording of this virtual meeting.

**Members present and absent/introductions:**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Time if arriving late or leaving early</b>
Donna LaScaleia, DPW Director, Chair	X	
Jody Kasper, Chief of Police, Vice Chair	X	
Carolyn Misch, Director of Planning and Sustainability	X	
Nanci Forrestall, Parking Enforcement Administrator	X	
Jamila Gore, City Councilor At Large	X	
Karen Foster, Ward 2 City Councilor	Absent	
Adam Novitt, Citizen	Absent	
Jami Albro-Fisher, Citizen	X	
Diana Day, Citizen	X	
Debin Bruce, Citizen	X	Left just before meeting adjourned.
<b>Advisor</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Time if arriving late or leaving early</b>
Maggie Chan, DPW Traffic Engineer	X	
<b>Staff</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Time if arriving late or leaving early</b>
Cyndi Quinn, DPW Administration Manager	X	
Beth A. Kaplowitt, Principal Account Clerk	X	

**2. Public comment**

- Amy Meltzer said that she is thankful for the bike lane barriers on New South Street. She has emailed City Councilors and the Mayor for five years about a different issue and has never gotten any responses. She also said that it is hard to find out what is going on with respect to a TCR that has been submitted for Olive Street;
- Jacqueline McCreanor of Northampton brought up the truck route escape signage in Ward 3. Director LaScaleia suggested that she and Jacqueline communicate offline and Jacqueline agreed.

**3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (s): May 16, 2023**

- A motion was proposed and seconded;
- A roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

Motion:	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
To approve the minutes from the May 16, 2023 meeting.	Jody Kasper	Debin Bruce	Yes, 8 No, 0 Abstain, 0

#### **4. Reports from departments and subcommittees/announcements/presentations**

- Department of Public Works (DPW) – Director Donna LaScaleia
  - The City has contracted with Caracas Construction Corporation for full depth reconstruction of Winter Street, including water & sewer mains and service connections and sidewalks. Construction is scheduled to be complete by Fall 2023;
  - The pavement markings project will be bid in July. This project includes repainting double yellow center lines, white lines, stop lines, white arrows, speed hump markings, parking spaces and crosswalks;
  - Safe Routes to School - MassDOT has contracted with Gomes Construction Company, Inc. to complete improvements that will enhance pedestrian safety near Bridge Street School. The Contractor will remobilize on June 26<sup>th</sup>;
  - Damon Road project – Motorists should expect delays at the intersection of King Street and Damon Road and alternating one-way traffic for curb installation. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023.
- Department of Planning & Sustainability – Director Carolyn Misch
  - The Florence Streetscape project punch list - The contractor is not able to do the installation of bike racks and wayfinding signs, so we will be doing that in-house as soon as possible.

#### **5. Matters before the Commission**

- a) Discussion of Traffic and Parking Issues in the Vicinity of the Bombyx Center for Arts and Equity located at 130 Pine Street
  - Director LaScaleia said that it is time to have a public discussion about the situation in the vicinity of 130 Pine Street in Florence. The area is highly trafficked. The intersection at the Sojourner Truth statue is tricky, and there is a lack of continuous sidewalks in the area as well. When events happen at the Bombyx Center there is an influx of cars. The TPC would like to hear from the public about potential issues in this residential area bordered by commercial property in which drivers do not necessarily expect large numbers of pedestrians;
  - Chief Kasper said that she became aware a few months ago that the neighbors in the area had met with Bombyx representatives. When a show ends, some residents have safety concerns because it is a tricky area with variable sidewalk conditions that is not designed for heavy pedestrian traffic. The Police Department (PD) has done some ticketing but has not yet done any towing. They have increased their enforcement efforts;
  - Director Misch said that the intersection isn't that different from some others in the City such as the one with the angled entry where Pine Street and Park Street intersect, the intersection near Lilly Library, and where South Main Street meets Nonotuck Street. The DPW has previously handled similar situations well by narrowing crossings and using other traffic calming measures;
  - Parking Enforcement Administrator Nanci Forrestall said that they began monitoring the situation once concerns were brought forward. They found that Bombyx has made a concerted effort to put out highly visible signs. The Parking Enforcement Officers

(PEOs) have been monitoring to see if Bombyx is able to notify concertgoers before shows about problems such as certain cars needing to be moved, etc. Since additional parking was added next door at a commercial location, the PEOs have observed a big improvement. Only a minimal number of tickets have been issued because the PEOs are not seeing violations;

- Executive Director Cassandra Holden of the Bombyx Center gave an overview of the different actions they have initiated to handle parking issues that have arisen in the year and a half that the Center has been open. Currently, Bombyx emails all ticketholders to give them parking information for each show. When parking changes have been implemented, it always takes a while for ticket holders to become acclimated, especially when the changes result in patrons having to park a little further away from the Center. They have temporarily hired a parking attendant to assist patrons in how best to utilize the available parking areas. Bombyx staff has been asked to park in the back. Signs have been put up as they continue to do their best to be responsive to neighbors and the City and to communicate to customers. She has given her cell phone number to neighbors so that they can notify her of concerns as they occur, and she announces problems from the stage so that they can be addressed promptly. She thanked Chief Kasper for the sign that has been placed in the pedestrian crosswalk by the PD and noted that it has helped a lot. They will be installing additional lighting and doing some grounds work to improve the walk;
- The following members of the public expressed their thoughts on this topic:
  - ❖ Carrie Cuthbert of 122 Pine Street
  - ❖ Patricia Mahar who lives next to Bombyx
- Kyle Homstead of the Bombyx Center pointed out that using different lots has worked well in the past. It will take some time to train the audience members about all of the parking options now available (primary, secondary and tertiary). They are also messaging audience members to keep them up to date regarding parking options;
- DPW Director LaScaleia said that the DPW often hears about parking problems in various areas. The DPW is allowed to post temporary “No Parking” signs and this could be a possibility here. They tried it recently by the High School to test it to see how drivers responded and if it was helpful;
- Chief Kasper said that they’ve had success with that in some areas. Posting “No Parking” zones does mean that street parking is more limited. She likes the idea of trying out temporary “No Parking” signs in this situation to assess what happens;
- Director LaScaleia closed the discussion by saying that the DPW and the PD will take a closer look to try and identify any “pinch points” that could be addressed.

## **6. Updates from Commission Chair and Vice Chair about previously submitted Traffic Calming Requests (TCRs)**

### **a.) Fruit Street**

- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that this TCR was submitted in August of 2021 and discussed by the TPC in September of 2022;
- ❖ This is a densely populated area with lots of traffic and parking congestion;
- ❖ The public made suggestions;
- ❖ The DPW & the PD have decided to stripe some parking spaces and feel that this will be helpful;
- ❖ This TCR is now closed.

b.) Fair Street

- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that this TCR was submitted in July 2021 and discussed by the TPC in September of 2022;
- ❖ The DPW & the PD have decided to recommend warning signage regarding curves and animals so that drivers know what to expect. This will be done as soon as they can;
- ❖ This TCR is now closed.

c.) Earle Street at Grove Street

- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that this TCR was submitted in September 2021 and discussed by the TPC in September of 2022;
- ❖ Due to lots of asphalt, it is less than ideal for pedestrians and bikes that need to negotiate wide crosswalks;
- ❖ The DPW & the PD have decided to generate an engineering design to tighten up the alignment and shrink the crossing;
- ❖ This TCR is now closed.

d.) Northampton High School, Elm Street

- ❖ A contract has been signed with Fuss & O'Neill for \$400,000 to generate a design for the improvements that have been recommended. The survey will be mobilized later this week or next. Surveyors and others will be looking at the old water and sewer infrastructure beneath the area;
- ❖ From the Traffic Calming perspective this matter is now closed;
- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that she will be back looking for more input once Fuss & O'Neill has come back to her.

e.) West Street

- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that there have been multiple TCRs submitted;
- ❖ It was discussed by the TPC in December of 2022;
- ❖ High traffic volumes and speeding are the primary concerns here;
- ❖ Smith College is going to fund a \$70,000 extensive feasibility study about how to most effectively improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety in this area;
- ❖ Director LaScaleia said that she will come back to the TPC with updates as they unfold.

**7. New Business**

- None.

**8. Adjourned at 4:50 p.m.**

- A motion was proposed and seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Motion	Motion by:	Second:	Vote:
Adjourn.	Carolyn Misch	Nanci Forrestall	Yes, 7 No, 0 Abstain, 0